Denmark mulls religious circumcision ban

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22 October 2014. A poll showing 74 percent support for banning male circumcision comes as parliament prepares for a new round of political discussion on religious circumcision of boys.

Nearly three fourths of Danes are in favor of banning the practice, a new poll has revealed, with just one out of ten respondents saying that this decision should be left with parents.

The poll results came as the Folketing, Denmark's legislature, prepared to hold a hearing on the practice of circumcision. Several left-wing and liberal parties are in favor of a ban, while other parties are divided on the issue.

Circumcision is frequently debated in Denmark. Following extensive media coverage in both 2012 and 2013, the Danish Health and Medicines Authority carried out a study on the potential health risks and benefits of circumcision. In June 2013, the agency determined that there was neither enough risk to justify outlawing circumcision nor enough documentation of its benefits to generally recommend the practice.

Despite the health authorities' findings, Wednesday's hearing may be the first step toward a ban of religious circumcision.

Around 1,000 to 2,000 circumcisions are performed in Denmark each year, primarily on Jewish and Muslim boys.

Jair Melchior of the Jewish community of Denmark warned politicians to not let opinion polls affect their stance on circumcision. "The problem is that there are so many assertions in the debate on circumcising boys. If it was so dangerous, the Jewish community would have been the first to stop it. But it's not," Melchior told the newspaper 'Metroxpress'.

Like Denmark, other Scandinavian countries have also been discussing a ban on male circumcision. Following intense debate in 2012, Germany passed a law allowing religious circumcision.

Source: World Jewish Congress

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